

Michael F. Easley  
Governor



State of North Carolina  
Office of the Governor

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**GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES \$1.8 MILLION GATES FOUNDATION GRANT  
FOR SCHOOL TURNAROUND INITIATIVE**

**RALEIGH** – Gov. Mike Easley today announced that the North Carolina High School Turnaround Initiative has received \$1.8 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This investment will help with the state's effort to make dramatic improvements in the state's lowest performing high schools.

"Major changes are needed to improve performance in schools that are not making the grade," said Easley. "We are demanding these schools go beyond traditional approaches, with significant restructuring. These funds will help expand our high school turnaround effort to make sure all students have the knowledge, talent and skill to succeed in the global economy."

The grant from the Gates Foundation will allow the state to create a permanent team of experts to support and monitor progress in each of the 37 schools currently in the turnaround process and train that team to implement proven models for school improvement. The grant will also support the deployment of assessment teams to visit other low-performing high schools across the state to fully understand the challenges they face and better develop steps for improving student performance. The foundation said Easley's efforts have made North Carolina a national leader.

"We must commit ourselves as a nation to increase graduation rates and prepare all students for college and work," said Tom Vander Ark, executive director of education at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. "North Carolina is a leader in this effort. By building a strong high school turnaround team, North Carolina can help ensure that all its schools are providing the high-quality education their students deserve."

The state is providing \$2.6 million toward the effort already and local school systems have set aside an additional \$4 million for restructuring. This summer Easley announced a comprehensive plan to improve the state's lowest performing high schools. That followed his August 2005 directive to the State Board of Education to send "turnaround assessment teams" to high schools that had below 60 percent proficiency on end-of-grade tests for the 2004-05 school year. The teams finished their work this spring.